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## **FORMER U.S. DEPUTY MARSHAL SENTENCED TO 24 MONTHS** **ON CIVIL RIGHTS-RELATED CHARGES**

WASHINGTON – Former Deputy U.S. Marshal Stephen Cook was sentenced today in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on civil rights charges arising out of his August 2005 assault on a detainee at the District of Columbia Superior Court, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Grace Chung Becker of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor. Cook was sentenced to 24 months imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution. Upon his release from prison, he will be monitored on federal supervised release for two years.

On Oct. 30, 2007, a federal jury in Washington, D.C., found Cook guilty of violating Omar Hunter’s civil rights, making false statements to federal investigators, and two counts of tampering with a witness. The evidence at trial showed that early on Aug. 30, 2005, Hunter was transported to the U.S. Marshals Service cellblock in the D.C. Superior Court following an arrest for a routine traffic offense. Shortly after arriving, Hunter made a comment that angered Cook, who was on duty as a Deputy U.S. Marshal. Cook responded by pulling Hunter, who was in restraints and offered no resistance, from a police van and assaulting him by punching and kicking Hunter in the head and upper body. Cook also submitted a false report about this incident to the U.S. Marshals Service and twice advised another Deputy U.S. Marshal to lie about the incident to a federal grand jury.

In addition to Cook, two former Deputy U.S. Marshals, Bryan Behringer and Michael Sharpstene, have been prosecuted for their involvement in the 2005 assault on Hunter. They have pleaded guilty to federal felony charges of making false statements to federal investigators regarding their knowledge of the assault on Hunter. They have not yet been sentenced.

“The Justice Department is committed to vigorously prosecuting any law enforcement officer who steps outside the law and abuses the rights of others,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Grace Chung Becker. “This sort of unlawful behavior undermines the tireless efforts of the vast majority of law enforcement officers throughout our nation who perform their duties with honor and professionalism.”

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Cummings and Trial Attorney Douglas Kern of the Civil Rights Division prosecuted this case.

The Civil Rights Division is committed to the vigorous enforcement of the federal criminal civil rights statutes, such as laws that prohibit the willful use of excessive force or other

acts of misconduct by law enforcement officials. The Department of Justice has compiled a significant record on criminal civil rights law enforcement misconduct prosecutions in the last seven years. During the last seven years, the Criminal Section obtained convictions of 53 percent more defendants (391 v. 256) in color of law cases than the previous seven years.

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